



**U.S. Department of Justice**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

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Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced that Michael F. Hardy, Jr., 24, pleaded guilty today to charges of defrauding an 85-year-old widow of over \$100,000 through the use of fraudulent home and landscaping repairs. Hardy was the last of three co-defendants to plead guilty; his plea followed that of co-defendant, Patrick F. Call, 22, on April 16, 2004. Both men are from Culpeper, Virginia.

Call and Hardy pleaded guilty to conspiracy to launder money, while Call also pleaded guilty to conspiracy to transport stolen property interstate. Call's sentencing is set for June 4, 2004, while Hardy's sentencing is set for July 2, 2004. Both men each face maximum sentences of 20 years imprisonment and a \$500,000 fine. A third co-defendant, Jeramy W. Hitt, 22, also of Culpeper, pleaded guilty on March 5, 2004, to conspiracy to transport stolen property interstate. He will be sentenced on May 14, 2004, and faces a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.

After being referred to the victim by someone who told the defendants it would be easy "to get her," Call, Hitt and Hardy went to the victim's home in the Palisades section of Washington, D.C., on October 30, 2003. They convinced her to let them repair her back porch roof, after which they bought \$200 worth of materials at a local store. Later that day they charged the victim \$3525 for those same materials. Over the next three weeks Call, Hitt and Hardy obtained 19 more checks from her, in amounts ranging from \$2200 to \$7500, for work that was not needed, improperly done, or not done at all. On every check the defendants told the victim to leave the payee line blank, after which Call, Hitt and Hardy would take the checks back to Virginia and persuade friends to fill in their own names and cash the checks at local banks. The check casher would then give the proceeds to the defendants, after which Call would take a cut for "expenses" and distribute the rest among Hardy, Hitt and himself. Between October 30 and November 24, 2003, the victim paid the defendants \$113,125.

This victim was not the only elderly homeowner targeted in this way. From the Summer of 1999 to the present, Patrick Call, working with Hitt, Hardy and others, defrauded numerous elderly residents of Virginia and Maryland, mostly in their mid-80's or older, of over \$200,000, using home repair, extermination and landscaping scams.

United States Attorney Paul J. McNulty said, "These men preyed upon some of the most vulnerable members of our community – elderly citizens living alone. This is the time of year

many people have home repair and landscape projects done. It is a time when predators like these defendants are most active. They are a menace to our community and will be aggressively prosecuted by this office.”

This case, part of larger effort to prosecute similar crimes against the elderly in northern Virginia, was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Arlington Police Department. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Michael E. Rich and Andrew E. Lelling.

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